

Basic Dog Training Goals

Posted by [admin](#) - March 16, 2016 - [Leash Work](#)

Training your dog, or any domestic animal for that matter, occurs every time you have any interaction with them. There are times when you are working on a specific behavior but you are always “training” them. The difficulty with this is that a majority of the time, we are inadvertently teaching and reinforcing undesirable behaviors. Alas, all is not lost! All it takes to change this pattern is a little knowledge. Beginning with the ability to understand how a dog thinks, what his body language says, and how to always be the smartest dog and leader of his pack! Yes that’s you TOP DOG always!

Being Top Dog (consider that your new name!) doesn’t mean you have to be an aggressive, loud, authoritarian, barbarian who is always shouting out orders and meting out corporal punishment. It means you consistently, and calmly, provide assertive leadership for your pet. So let’s get started, remember, this will be fun! You will make mistakes, but our pets are forgiving and mistakes can be corrected. Your pet will make mistakes too, but we are going to make every effort to set them up for success!

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Every training session has 5 requirements:

- Before you can teach your dog anything you have to have their attention!
- Start with a clear goal in mind.
- Allow yourself enough time to reach your goal.
- ALWAYS end on a positive note!
- Make sure no one can or will get hurt, stay safe!

THE NAME GAME

In order to work with your pet you have to have one thing EVERY TIME!

Their attention! If you don’t have their attention you won’t be able to teach them anything! They will also need to be fairly calm. If your pet is jumping around like a kangaroo you won’t be able to get their attention. THE GOAL OF THIS EXERCISE IS TO GET YOUR DOG TO LOOK AT YOU when you say their name.

Step 1

Stand in a room and have your dog on a short leash (4-6’). They can be wandering around on the leash, as long as they aren’t pulling on you or leaving the perimeter the leash length allows. The goal of this exercise is to get your dog to look at you when you say their name. Start saying your dog’s name, “Rover”. Say their name over and over. Then when the dog LOOKS at you, praise them. Depending on your dog’s personality they may make immediate eye contact or do everything but look at you. If all you get is a quick glance, the first time, praise that. You want to reward them for any attempt at the correct response. Continue with this exercise until you get 3 good responses. Reward each response accordingly, whether it’s a “good dog” and a pat, a treat or a favorite toy, let them know that they did the right thing. Repeat this exercise at least 3 times a day. Keep the sessions short and accept small improvements as success. In between the exercise on the leash do the same thing every time you interact with your dog. Say their name and when they look at you reward them. Make sure that they will consistently make good eye contact, every time you say their name, for at least 3 days before you move on to the next step. It takes at least 3 days for any dog to process and retain new behaviors. Depending on the individual it may take longer. Remember be consistent and

persistent! If you move forward to soon you will just have to go back, so don't be in a hurry! This exercise is the very foundation of everything to come. If your foundation isn't solid the rest of your building will at some point topple over.

Step 2

You will repeat the same exercise, except you have moved to a small room with the door closed. Let the dog wander around the room, it is usually best for you to stand by the door as the dog will usually gravitate in that direction. Say their name just like in Step 1, but this time if your dog is across the room and even glances over his shoulder in your direction, go to him and tell him he's a good boy! Then return to your position and repeat. If all you get the first day is him glancing in your direction that is ok, he acknowledged his name. Continue doing this exercise until your dog will stop what he's doing, look at you and walk over to you. Remember it may take several days or more to get to this point. Make sure to reward each improved response. The first time he even turns and looks at you make a huge big deal about it. Same rules apply as in Step 1, have him responding consistently for a minimum of 3 days before moving on to the next step.

Notes:

When your dog actually turns and looks at you if you lean forward, pulling your shoulders towards each other, pat your thighs, and take a step back, many times they will come to you. That body position invites them to come to you. If they do, come, make a really big deal about it. If they just stay where they are go to them and tell them what a good dog they are. Remember you aren't asking them to come, but when they do it's an added bonus.

Step 3

Same as step one, except this time you will be outside with your dog on a leash. The same rules apply, he can be looking around, sniffing etc. as long as he is NOT pulling on you. There should be slack in the leash. When he is interested in what he is doing but before he gets to the end of the leash and makes it taut, say his name, keep saying it until he looks at you, when he makes eye contact reward him. If he is totally not even glancing in your direction give a short quick tug on your leash as you say his name. Don't pull, just quickly bend and straighten your elbow. If you pull he will pull back! He should look at you. If he doesn't, return to step 2 for a few days and remind him that when you say his name, he needs to look at you.

Step 4 and Beyond

Your next step will be to repeat the exercise on a longer leash, say 10-20 feet. All the other requirements are the same. By this time, he should respond quickly and consistently when you say his name. If he doesn't, take a step back. Remember you will most likely be incorporating this exercise into every interaction you have with him. When you feed him, before he gets his food say his name, he doesn't get his food until he looks at you. When you are going to put on his leash to go for a walk, say his name, when he looks at you put the leash on. The repetition and consistency will make it an ingrained behavior and response for both of you.

The next step will be to do the name game in an enclosed outdoor space, like your yard, dog park etc. Although if you do it at a dog park, try to go when there aren't a lot of other dogs that he will want to play with. If there are a lot of other dogs you may need to keep him on a leash the first few minutes to remind him to focus on you. When he does his reward can be to go and play! If he comes back to you or looks at you while he's playing say his name and tell him what a good boy he is!

Once Rover is doing the name game consistently, everything else will happen much quicker. When you say "Rover" and he looks at you, then you can say "sit", "wait", "lay down" etc. and it will be much easier to teach because YOU HAVE HIS ATTENTION!

Remember during this process, dogs make mistakes just like we do. No one is perfect, but if you are having a consistently hard time always go back a step. Also evaluate yourself, or have someone else watch you. You may be giving your dog mixed signals and confusing him. Don't make it a drill, change it up a little, make it fun, and keep sessions short. If you have a high energy dog that has been cooped up all day, try to do something that lets him exercise, before you ask him to concentrate and focus. Remember we want to set everyone up for success!